tracking

OR HOW I LEARNED TO STOP HORRYING AND LOVE THE LOG

a small also exclusive mixtape

by cathmothcrow

CATHMOTHCROW.COM

Somehow I've gotten into the habit of tracking a buncha my habits on various apps. I log the movies I watch, the shows I see, the books I read, the food I eat. When I stop to think about it, the idea of logging so much data about myself – creating a self-portrait made of user profiles – it makes me a little bit squeamish. Shouldn't I be able to just exist, carefree, without capturing all these fragments of activity, keeping tally? Am I not just playing into the hands of The Man, gathering all this data about myself and putting it into nice, easily-exportable websites where it can be mined and grouped and sold?

But after talking to some friends about it, I came to realize that all this logging and tracking is a form of memory-keeping, like a very specific diary about a single topic. These data points form a connect-the-dot image of who I am. Sure, Big Brother might have his ugly, greedy paws in some of these honeypots – aggregating all my data into some marketing profile to better sell trash to other thirty-somethings – but what I came to realize is that no one cares that I've seen the Smashing Pumpkins in concert 7 times or that I've given the Night in the Woods soundtrack 622 spins more than I do. I like being able to look back and remember, to flip through the logs and recollect.

LAST.FM

The first song I ever logged on Last.fm was "Your Algebra" by the Shins, almost twenty years ago in December 2025. Every few years, I'd get an itch to make a fresh new account, but I've been scrobbling tunes to one called hmssaturnine since 2011 (the first song I logged there was "Heroes" by Bowie.) I'm glad that I stopped hopping around and now have almost 15 years of digital listening data to comb through when I'm feeling nostalgic. And I'm relieved that I never deleted those even older accounts from my teenage years. In case you were wondering, my #1, all-time, top scrobbled band is My Chemical Romance.

STORYGRAPH

LETTERBOXD

When I first made a Letterboxd, none of my friends used it, but over time more have joined and now I really love seeing how we all rate different films. Tracking movies made me want to start tracking the books I've read, too, so I'm trying out logging them in Storygraph this year.

DISCOGS

This one is a necessity. My record + tape collection is embarassingly large and Discogs is how I keep track of it all and avoid buying duplicates.

HEALTH

This one isn't by choice. I had to get some bloodwork done at my annual health checkup and thanks to some elevated numbers, I now get to track my meals and blood pressure and all that jazz. And I'm trying to not get obsessive about it or let it make me anxious!

FOODUCATE

And in addition to all these apps, I'm also a perpetual journaler and a daily diarist. The background art of this zine is the scanned cover of my bullet journal, in all its stickered glory.

CONCERT ARCHIVES

I got bored at work one day and spent a good five hours adding every single concert I've ever seen to this website, including tiny house shows where I had to dig for flyers to record accurate dates. As ticket stubs become a thing of the past, I'm glad this archive exists.

STRAVA

A pretty cool lifehack I learned is that you can trick yourself into building a jogging habit by tracking your runs and then challenging yourself to beat your own past times. Seeing my progress graphed out makes me wanna run farther/faster.